

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application as presently amended and in light of the following discussion is respectfully requested.

Claims 34-51 are presently active; Claims 1-33 have been canceled without prejudice, and Claims 34-51 having been added by way of the present amendment. No new matter has been added.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 2-5 and 10-33 were objected to due to informalities. The length of the Abstract was objected to. Claims 12-33 were objected for improper format. Claims 4, 8, and 10-33 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. Claims 1-5 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Applicants' Figure 10 in view of Shirai et al (U.S. Pat. No. 5,550,452). Claims 6-11 were objected to for being dependent from a rejected base claim but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form to include the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Claims 20-25 were indicated as being allowed.

Regarding the objection to the claims, the original claims have been canceled without prejudice and replaced with new independent claims containing the identified allowable subject matter in Claims 6-11. In these rewritten claims, the informalities identified in original Claims 2-5 and 10-33 have been addressed. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that the objection to the claims has been overcome.

Regarding the objection to the Abstract, the Abstract has been shortened. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that the objection to the Abstract has been overcome.

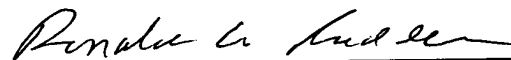
Regarding the 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, Claims 4, 8, and 10-33 have been presently canceled. New Claim 36 containing the subject matter of Claim 4 clarifies which parts are included in the socket means and the cap means. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that the 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, rejection has been overcome.

Next, Applicants acknowledge with appreciation the indication of allowable subject matter in Claims 6-11. In order to expedite prosecution of the present application, the present amendment introduces new independent Claims 34-51 containing the identified allowable subject matter. Of these claims, Claims 34-39 represent former Claims 6-11 rewritten in independent format. The remaining added independent claims include the subject matter of these rewritten claims along with other features. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that independent Claims 34-51 all contain allowable subject matter and patentably define over the applied prior art.

Consequently, in view of the present amendment and in light of the above discussions, the outstanding grounds for rejection are believed to have been overcome. The application as amended herewith is believed to be in condition for formal allowance. An early and favorable action to that effect is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

OBLON, SPIVAK, McCLELLAND,
MAIER & NEUSTADT, P.C.



Gregory J. Maier
Attorney of Record
Registration No. 25,599
Ronald A. Rudder, Ph.D.
Registration No. 45,618

Customer Number
22850

Tel: (703) 413-3000
Fax: (703) 413 -2220
(OSMMN 08/03)
GJM:RAR:clh